

Message Text

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S E C R E T BANGKOK 10587

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, CB, TH, VS

SUBJ: DISPOSITION OF VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIAN MAP/MASF/DAV
ASSETS

REF: A. STATE 116751; B. STATE 130240; C. STATE 104005;
D. BANGKOK 8603

1. THE DISPOSITION OF VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIAN MAP/MASF/DAV ASSETS CONTINUES TO BE A POLITICAL ISSUE IN THAILAND. WHILE THE MATTER HAS PRETTY WELL DISAPPEARED FROM THE HEADLINES FOR THE MOMENT, THE NEW REGIME IN SOUTH VIETNAM SUPPORTED BY HANOI, CONTINUES TO ASSERT ITS CLAIM TO THE VIETNAMESE ASSETS AND TO CONTEND THAT THEIR RETURN TO VIETNAM IS A PRECONDITION TO THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH THAILAND. IT HAS TO BE EXPECTED THAT THE CAMBODIANS WILL TAKE THE SAME POSITION AT SUCH TIME AS THEY AND THE THAI ENTER INTO A DIALOGUE ON FUTURE RELATIONS.

2. AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, THE ONLY ITEMS THE U.S. WISHES TO REGAIN FOR ITS OWN USE ARE SIX C-7 AIRCRAFT, ONE F-5E, AND CERTAIN SHIPS AND BOATS. WE BELIEVE THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE OF RECOVERING THESE AIRCRAFT AND SOME OR ALL OF THE BOATS.

3. WE HAVE ALREADY OFFERED THE THAI A SIZABLE PACKAGE
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MADE UP OF EX-CAMBODIAN AND VIETNAMESE ASSETS (REF C).

TURNOVER OF THIS PACKAGE HAS BEEN DELAYED BY A.) U.S. CONCERN OVER THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE THAI MIGHT EVENTUALLY RETURN SOME OR ALL OF IT TO CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM, AND B.) OUR DISPLEASURE AT THE DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE AMERICAN EMBASSY FOLLOWING THE MAYAGUEZ EPISODE. IN AN EFFORT TO RESOLVE THE FIRST OF THESE PROBLEMS, WE PROPOSED TO CHIEF OF STAFF, SUPREME COMMAND, GENERAL KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN THAT THERE BE AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE STIPULATING THAT THE EQUIPMENT WAS BEING TURNED OVER SUBJECT TO ALL APPLICABLE AGREEMENTS GOVERNING USE AND DISPOSITION OF MATERIALS PROVIDED UNDER THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (WHICH WOULD, OF COURSE, INCLUDE U.S. CONTROL OVER ULTIMATE DISPOSITION OF THE ITEMS TRANSFERRED). KRIANGSAK OPPOSED THIS SOLUTION. HE ARGUED THAT TO ATTEMPT AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS WITH MOD WOULD SERVE ONLY TO REOPEN POLITICAL CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE MATTER. HE SAID THAT THE THAI MILITARY AGREED THAT THE ITEMS IN QUESTION WERE GOVERNED BY MAP RULES AND REGULATIONS, AND THAT ONCE THEY WERE IN THE ARSENAL OF THE ROYAL THAI ARMED FORCES, THEY WOULD STAY THERE.

4. THERE REMAIN THOSE ITEMS EX-CAMBODIA-VIETNAM WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN OFFERED TO THE RTG. THE EMBASSY AND MACTHAI HAVE RECOMMENDED (REF D) THAT THESE ITEMS, TOO, SHOULD BE OFFERED, ALTHOUGH IT IS FAR FROM CERTAIN THAT THE THAI WOULD WANT ALL OF THEM. THIS PROPOSAL WAS ADMITTEDLY POLITICAL IN NATURE. IT WAS AIMED AT STIFFENING THE SPINE OF THE RTG IN ANY FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITH THE DRV AND THE PRG ON THIS QUESTION, AND ALSO AT PROVIDING THE THAI WITH SOME EXTRA ASSURANCE OF OUR READINESS TO CONTINUE TO ASSIST THEM IN STRENGTHENING THEIR ARMED FORCES. IT WAS CONSIDERED, MOREOVER, THAT ANY EQUIPMENT ACCEPTED INTO THE THAI ARMED FORCES INVENTORY WOULD BE HIGHLY UNLIKELY TO BE TURNED OVER TO CAMBODIA OR VIETNAM.

5. IN OUR VIEW, IF WE PROCEED WITH THE TURNOVER TO THE THAI OF THE EQUIPMENT ALREADY OFFERED, AND OFFER THE REMAINDER TO THE THAI (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF
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THOSE ITEMS WE WISH TO RECOVER FOR OUR OWN USE), THIS WILL ENHANCE OUR PROSPECTS OF RECOVERING SOON THE ITEMS WE WANT TO KEEP FOR OURSELVES, AND POSSIBLY ALSO THOSE ITEMS NOT WANTED BY THE THAI WHICH WE WOULD LIKE TO REDISTRIBUTE TO OTHER MAP RECIPIENTS.

6. WE WOULD OBTAIN FROM SUPREME COMMAND WRITTEN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT THE PROVISIONS OF MAP APPLY TO

EVERYTHING WE TURN OVER. WHILE THIS WOULD NOT PROVIDE
THE RECOGNITION IN PRINCIPLE THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE
FROM THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT, IT WOULD COMMIT THE PEOPLE
WHO HOLD THE POWER IN THIS PARTICULAR GAME,
THE THAI MILITARY.

7. IT BECOMES INCREASINGLY PRESSING THAT WE BREAK
OUT OF THE CURRENT STALEMATE. PROPER MAINTENANCE OF
THE AIRCRAFT BY U.S. FORCES IS BECOMING HIGHLY BURDENSOME,
AND RESPONSIBILITY SHOULD BE SHIFTED TO THE THAI AS
SOON AS POSSIBLE.

8. REQUEST DEPARTMENT'S REACTION TO THESE VIEWS.
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